

## Back to Romania

Written by Dylan Kissane

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DYLAN KISSANE, NOV 19 2013

When I arrived in Europe in March 2006 the first international academic event I attended was the IAPSS General Assembly and Academic Conference. This conference brought together students of political science and international politics from across Europe and, indeed, across the world. I made friends and connections that remain strong to this day and that have, in various ways, continued to impact and improve the teaching of international politics at CEFAM.

At that conference – hosted by the University of Amsterdam and the polisci association Machiavelli – I met researchers like Venla Stodolsky from Finland, Enzo Le Fevre from Italy, Iana Stantieru from Moldova and Stephan Schatzmann from Switzerland. All would go on to play guest roles in the POL 210 course at CEFAM in recent years, either providing case studies for students, sharing their knowledge in interviews for the online version of the course, or arriving in person to speak to students about their careers.

But along with the professional connections that are made at any conference came the personal ones. I met some incredibly hard-drinking Georgian scholars, some hilarious Dutch students, a Finnish student with an unforgettable personal story of achievement in the face of adversity, and a Canadian researcher who I would later go on to work with on an international journalism project, a project that would later serve as the Launchpad into a successful career as a journalist in Quebec.

Recalling that conference, though, the connections I remember most were with the Romanian students and scholars I met, in particular a group from the University of Babes-Bolyai in Cluj, Romania. Part of the association SSE Cluj, these bright, enthusiastic and talented group of young people inspired me to learn more about their country. Indeed, when I had the opportunity to visit Romania a few months later, I was welcomed with open arms by those that I had met in Amsterdam and guided around the ancient city of Cluj on Europe Day, the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 2006.

I enjoyed exploring the city with SSE members and I fell in love with the people and their attitudes. Though obviously poor compared to both my native Australia and my adopted France, there was an optimism about the young people I met that was overwhelming. The road to success, at least at this point, meant leaving Romania for an international post and the only way to access these sorts of opportunities was by achieving superb grades in higher education. The students I met worked hard to achieve these grades and, indeed, many went on to careers in international academia, international organisations, and European institutions.

On Thursday I return to Romania, though to Bucharest this time, and again to an IAPSS sponsored conference. In the seven years since Amsterdam I have established my career in Europe, travelled across the world teaching and researching, and kept in contact with those fabulous Romanian friends I met in Amsterdam. As chance will have it I'll even be crossing paths with two at the airport in Bucharest as they head for London and I arrive from Munich, serendipity in international action, so to speak. This time around I'll be attending the conference as one of the invited professors and not a student, but I hope to engage with the same interested, motivated and high performing students that I know IAPSS events attract every year.

I can't wait to see for myself the changes that have occurred in Romania since my last visit and the impact that EU accession has had on the state. More than that, though, I am looking forward to the opportunity to make a new series

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of connections with future professors and practitioners in international relations and strengthen the bonds of friendship between this Franco-Australian professor and his Romanian colleagues.

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### **About the author:**

**Dylan Kissane** is Professor of International Politics at CEFAM in Lyon, France. He is the curator of The Ivory Tower blog on E-IR.